Contents

U.S. MILITARY

- White House VA Hotline now fully staffed and operational around the clock to serve nation’s Veterans

GLOBAL

- AI-controlled brain implants for mood disorders tested in people
- Babies’ brains damaged by pollution, UNICEF says
- Bat cave study finds new clues about SARS virus origin
- Dementia set to triple in next 30 years as global population ages
- Doctors find brain abnormalities in victims of Cuba mystery
- “Living ink” laced with microbes makes molecules on demand
- Looking below the locks: teaching hairdressers to spot melanoma
- Lyme disease testing: New tests could offer more accurate and less ambiguous results
- Phase 1 trials promising for 2 Zika vaccines, including shelved one
- Study identifies risk factors for ESBL carriage in PICU
- UN report cites environmental threat of antimicrobial resistance

INFLUENZA

- AFHSB: DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary
- APHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report
- ECDC: Flu News Europe
- NHRC: Operational Infectious Diseases - Weekly Surveillance Report
- The role of parainfluenza viruses in severe respiratory infections
- This year’s flu vaccine may only be 10% effective, experts warn
- Updated guidance for pandemic flu includes new ways to track cases

VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

- European agency reports on chronic wasting disease, TSE cases
- FDA warns against eating raw dough because of the risk of E. coli HUS
- Report shows only half of European food recalls made public
- Salmonella outbreak in Pacific Northwest linked to precut melon
• Should you be worried about the arsenic in your baby food?

WELLNESS

• Baby born from mother with uterus transplant delivered in Texas hospital
• Cataract surgery may prolong your life
• Even low-dose contraceptives slightly increase breast cancer risk
• FDA warns consumers about adverse events associated with Limbrel, a dietary supplement
• High military rate of sexually transmitted disease defies treatment and education efforts
• Kids aren’t protecting themselves against STDs during oral sex
• Opioid crisis: Criminal justice referrals miss treatment opportunities, study suggests
• Rare and mysterious vomiting illness linked to heavy marijuana use
• Teenagers embrace JUUL, saying it’s discreet enough to vape in class
• Two hidden cancer causes: Diabetes and obesity

USAFRICOM

• Africa: ‘Opophobia’ has left Africa in agony
• Africa: Poor regulation, dodgy pills spur plan for African drugs agency
• Angola: Angola reports 42 microcephaly cases but no Zika involvement
• South Africa: South Africa reports Listeriosis outbreak, most cases in Gauteng province

USEUCOM

• Afghanistan: U.S. troops to be trained on reporting child sex abuse by Afghans
• Yemen: Cholera could resurge in Yemen due to lack of aid, fuel

USEUCOM

• United Kingdom: England measles outbreaks linked to ongoing large outbreaks in Europe
• United Kingdom: Medical issues affect British army readiness

USNORTHCOM

• U.S.: Amid Puerto Rico disaster, hospital ship admitted just 6 patients a day
• U.S.: FDA panel recommends Zika testing of donated blood be relaxed
• U.S.: Health risks to farmworkers increase as workforce ages
• U.S.: Indiana workers hurt or killed on job prohibited from suing employer
• U.S.: Raging wildfires tear through Southern California as officials warn of increasing danger

USPACOM

• Asia: Filovirus signs in fruit bats indicate circulation in Southeast Asia
• India: 132 chronic lymphatic filariasis cases reported in Maharashtra
• India: Variations in epidemiological transition across the states of India, 1990–2016 in the Global Burden of Disease Study
• Indonesia: Indonesia fights ’extraordinary’ diphtheria outbreak that has killed 32
• Nepal: Nepal reports 1st ever case of rat-bite fever
• Philippines: WHO reviewing data on Sanofi dengue vaccine, urges limited use

USSOUTHCOM

• Cuba battling medicine shortages in wake of cash crunch
• The Americas: PAHO reports 1,100 new chikungunya cases in recent weeks
Identifying Promising Approaches to U.S. Army Institutional Change

The U.S. Army is facing challenges stemming from behavioral health issues, misconduct, and adjustment to changing demographics.

Long-term solutions to these problems very likely require changes in the Army’s organizational culture and climate, but institutional change in large organizations is typically very difficult.

To deal with these challenges, researchers identify promising approaches to institutional change from the literature on organizational culture and climate.


November 2017 - This report summarizes data on the demographic and military characteristics of women and women of childbearing potential (WOCBP) in the active component of the U.S. Armed Forces during 2012–2016. Data on pregnancy-related care and birth rates are also presented. In 2016, WOCBP comprised the vast majority of active component service women. The largest proportions of WOCBP were in the categories of women who were 20–24 years old, non-Hispanic white, junior enlisted rank, and in a communications/intelligence occupation. ... In 2016, 13.1% of all WOCBP had at least one pregnancy-related event and 1.1% of deployed WOCBP had a pregnancy event during a deployment to CENTCOM AOR. The prevalence of pregnancy decreased slightly over the surveillance period. ... Rates of live births were highest among women who were 30–34 years old, senior enlisted rank, Army, in healthcare and communications/intelligence occupations, and married. About one-quarter of the total live births were cesarean deliveries.

Medical Surveillance Monthly Report

White House VA Hotline now fully staffed and operational around the clock to serve nation’s Veterans

29 November - VA announced that the White House VA Hotline, first launched in June as part of President Donald J. Trump’s commitment to reforming VA, is now fully staffed with live agents working to serve Veterans 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The hotline, which became 24-hour operational in mid-October, is staffed by a team consisting of more than 90 percent Veterans or a family member of a Veteran. The hotline staffing is in direct response to Veterans’ requests to talk to agents who could relate to their experiences. ... The hotline can be accessed at 855-948-2311 and is VA’s first non-clinical, non-emergency around-the-clock call center. It provides Veterans a supplemental option to report issues if they are not being addressed through VA’s normal customer service channels.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
AI-controlled brain implants for mood disorders tested in people

22 November - Brain implants that deliver electrical pulses tuned to a person’s feelings and behaviour are being tested in people for the first time. Two teams funded by the US military’s research arm, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), have begun preliminary trials of ‘closed-loop’ brain implants that use algorithms to detect patterns associated with mood disorders. These devices can shock the brain back to a healthy state without input from a physician. The work ... could eventually provide a way to treat severe mental illnesses that resist current therapies. ... The general approach ... is known as deep-brain stimulation. ... Early evidence suggested that constant stimulation of certain brain regions could ease chronic depression, but a major study involving 90 people with depression found no improvement after a year of treatment. Nature

Babies' brains damaged by pollution, UNICEF says

6 December - Seventeen million babies under the age of one are breathing toxic air, putting their brain development at risk, the UN children's agency has warned. Babies in South Asia were worst affected, with more than 12 million living in areas with pollution six times higher than safe levels. A further four million were at risk in East Asia and the Pacific. Unicef said breathing particulate air pollution could damage brain tissue and undermine cognitive development. Its report said there was a link to “verbal and non-verbal IQ and memory, reduced test scores, grade point averages among schoolchildren, as well as other neurological behavioural problems.” BBC News

Bat cave study finds new clues about SARS virus origin

1 December - Chinese researchers who spent 5 years examining SARS-related viruses collected from horseshoe bats in a Yunnan province cave found 11 new strains that have all the genetic building blocks of the strain that has infected humans, hinting that recombination between the bats' viral strains may have produced the ancestor of the deadly outbreak. Experiments showed that some of the newly identified strains can enter human cells using the same cell receptor as the SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) virus. CIDRAP

Dementia set to triple in next 30 years as global population ages

7 December - The World Health Organization warns the number of people living with dementia globally will triple from 50 million to 152 million by 2050. WHO is launching a global monitoring system on dementia, which will track progress and identify areas of concern. The WHO reports dementia exacts a huge social and economic burden, one that
will grow as people age and succumb to this mental illness. The agency estimates five percent of the world’s older population suffers from dementia and is in need of care. Belying common belief, WHO says this is not mainly a problem of rich countries as dementia also affects people living in poorer countries. The health agency says the cost of caring for dementia patients today is $818 billion or one percent of the world’s Gross Domestic Product. VOA

Doctors find brain abnormalities in victims of Cuba mystery

6 December - Doctors treating the U.S. embassy victims of suspected attacks in Cuba have discovered brain abnormalities as they search for clues to explain hearing, vision, balance and memory damage, The Associated Press has learned. It’s the most specific finding to date about physical damage, showing that whatever it was that harmed the Americans, it led to perceptible changes in their brains. The finding is also one of several factors fueling growing skepticism that some kind of sonic weapon was involved. Medical testing has revealed the embassy workers developed changes to the white matter tracts that let different parts of the brain communicate, several U.S. officials said, describing a growing consensus held by university and government physicians researching the attacks. White matter acts like information highways between brain cells. AP

"Living ink" laced with microbes makes molecules on demand

1 December - "Living ink" sounds like fantasy from a Harry Potter novel. But it is actually how scientists describe a new 3-D gel laced with bacteria that turn out molecules helpful in wound healing and water cleanup. The material can be customized for different uses by adding a variety of bacteria, and sprayed out of the nozzle of a 3-D printer into many useful shapes. Although bacteria can cause infections, they are also versatile workhorses. Various types of microbes break down pollutants, synthesize useful compounds and carry out photosynthesis and other metabolic processes. “We thought 3-D printing might be a nice opportunity to structure these bacteria into functional materials,” says Patrick Rühs, a postdoctoral researcher studying complex materials. Scientific American

Looking below the locks: teaching hairdressers to spot melanoma

1 December - Of all types of skin cancer, melanoma causes the majority of deaths. When on the scalp it can be especially difficult to catch in a self-examination. ... One person who might be able to help: your hairdresser. While cutting your hair, they’ve got a great view for
Fact Sheet: Leptospirosis in Puerto Rico

All U.S. Army Soldiers and Civilian personnel assisting with disaster recovery operations in Puerto Rico should be aware that Leptospirosis is a disease present on the island. This disease is most commonly acquired through contact with water or soil contaminated by the urine of infected animals. Direct contact with an infected animal, wild or domestic (livestock, cats and dogs), can also result in illness. In order to reduce the risk of becoming infected, avoid prolonged contact with surface/standing water, cover cuts and scrapes, and do not swim in flood waters.

The fact sheet is also available in Spanish.

Lyme disease testing: New tests could offer more accurate and less ambiguous results

7 December - New tests to detect early Lyme disease – which is increasing beyond the summer months - could replace existing tests that often do not clearly identify the infection before health problems occur. … [Scientists] say new diagnostic methods offer a better chance for more accurate detection of the infection from the Lyme bacteria. … “New tests are more exact and are not as susceptible to the same false-positive or false-negative results associated with current tests,” said [Steven] Schutzer. Schutzer and his colleagues say more accurate testing would help doctors decide when to prescribe the antibiotics used to clear the infection and help avoid severe long-term health problems. Antibody tests, can take three weeks or more for the antibody levels to reach a point where the tests can pick up a positive result. Outbreak News Today

Phase 1 trials promising for 2 Zika vaccines, including shelved one

5 December - Results from phase 1 trials of two different types of Zika vaccines, one of them an inactivated vaccine recently shelved by Sanofi over shaky research support and other challenges, found that they were safe and immunogenic. One of the studies focused on two different version of a DNA-based vaccines, while the other detailed findings for the inactivated vaccine. … A dramatic fall in Zika cases prompted the US government to reshuffle its Zika-related research priorities. About 2 months ago, Sanofi announced it was halting work on its candidate inactivated Zika vaccine in the face of scaled-back funding from the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA). Also, a US Army licensing arrangement with Sanofi ran into tough political headwinds, with some politicians urging the government to secure an agreement to limit the resulting vaccine’s price. About 20 Zika vaccines are at various developmental stages. CIDRAP

Study identifies risk factors for ESBL carriage in PICU

6 December - A small study by researchers at The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine has identified risk factors for extended-spectrum beta-lactamase (ESBL)-producing Enterobacteriaceae carriage in patients admitted to a pediatric intensive care unit (PICU). … When the 24 ESBL-positive children were matched with 72 ESBL-negative control patients, the researchers found that within the previous 6 months, the case-patients were more likely
to have had previous ESBL colonization or infection (17% vs. 1%) or to have been hospitalized in a high-ESBL-burden country (17% vs. 1%). Case-patients were also more likely to have had chemotherapy (odds ratio [OR], 4.6) or a hematopoietic stem cell transplantation (OR, 10.1). Nine case patients developed invasive infections with ESBL-producing organisms, compared with none of the control patients. The researchers say the findings are significant because ESBL-producing organisms are frequently resistant to antibiotics used in empiric sepsis regimens, and genes encoding ESBLs often carry other antibiotic resistance mechanisms. CIDRAP

UN report cites environmental threat of antimicrobial resistance

5 December - A report today from the United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment) highlights the environmental dimension of antimicrobial resistance. The Frontiers Report, launched during the third UN Environment Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya, lists the release of antimicrobial compounds into the environment by households, hospitals, pharmaceutical factories, and farms as one of six emerging issues of environmental concern because of the potential impact on antibiotic resistance. The other issues are nanomaterials, marine protected areas, sand and dust storms, solar power, and human migration. While the extent of environmental contamination from antimicrobial production and use by humans and food-producing animals remains unclear, several studies in recent years have documented the presence of antibiotics in agricultural soil, river and lake sediment, tidal estuaries, and wastewater facilities. CIDRAP

INFLUENZA

AFHSB: DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary

For Week 47, influenza activity decreased to low to moderate for most of the country.

- NORTHCOM: Influenza activity increased during week 47, and ranged from minimal to high, depending on the state.
- EUCOM: Influenza activity remained minimal across EUCOM, except for Spain, which had low activity.
- PACOM: Influenza activity remained minimal across PACOM, except for Hawaii, which had low activity.
- CENTCOM and AFRICOM: Influenza activity was moderate in Afghanistan and the United Arab Emirates, but was minimal in other CENTCOM locations with available data.
- SOUTHCOM: Influenza activity was minimal in Honduras this week based on DMSS data. DHA - Armed Forces Health Surveillance Branch
APHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report

For the week ending 25 November 2017 (Week 47)

A small outbreak of nosocomial influenza cases were reported to APHC involving 16 employees and 7 patients at WRNMMC since the last report for week 45. Influenza activity is increasing among active duty and non-active duty.

- ILI Activity: Army incident ILI outpatient visits in week 47 were 10% lower than the same week last year.
- Influenza cases: Five influenza-associated hospitalizations were reported to APHC through DRSi in week 47. At this same time during the last influenza season, two influenza-associated hospitalizations were reported through week 47.
- Viral specimens: During week 47, 141 of 914 (15%) laboratory specimens tested positive for respiratory pathogens. RHC-C reported most (43%) of the influenza A-positive specimens. APHC

CDC: Flu View - Weekly U.S. Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 47 (November 19-25, 2017), influenza activity increased in the United States.

- Viral Surveillance: The most frequently identified influenza virus type reported by public health laboratories during week 47 was influenza A. The percentage of respiratory specimens testing positive for influenza in clinical laboratories is increasing.
- Pneumonia and Influenza Mortality: The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza (P&I) was below the system-specific epidemic threshold in the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) Mortality Surveillance System. CDC

ECDC: Flu News Europe

Week 47/2017 (20–26 November 2017)

- Influenza activity across Europe remained at low levels.
- Of the individuals sampled on presenting with ILI or ARI to sentinel primary healthcare sites, 6.3% tested positive for influenza viruses, which is higher than the previous week (3.7%).
- Data from 21 countries or regions reporting to the EuroMOMO project indicated that all-cause excess mortality was within normal ranges for this time of year. European Center for Disease Prevention and Control/WHO

NHRC: Operational Infectious Diseases - Weekly Surveillance Report

30 November - Febrile respiratory illness cases:

- Military Recruits - 16 positive of 34 tested
The role of parainfluenza viruses in severe respiratory infections

1 December - It is widely assumed that the most likely manifestation of a pandemic will be a respiratory illness. ... Among the viruses that cause respiratory infections are the human parainfluenza viruses (HPIVs). This group of RNA viruses, which are part of the paramyxovirus family that also includes viruses such as RSV, Nipah, Hendra, and metapneumovirus, consists of 4 strains. ... In this study, [researchers] randomly selected 1,229 inpatients from 11 different ... hospitals in the Beijing area who were hospitalized with fever and cough and had a symptom duration of 10 days or fewer. Of these patients, 81 (6.6%) were positive for parainfluenza virus, with the majority being positive for HPIV-3. Coinfections with other viruses--most commonly rhinovirus--occurred in 18 (1.4%) patients. ... Over 6% of severe acute respiratory cases in those over 60 were caused by HPIVs. The HPIV-3 isolates were all from the same viral cluster (C), and some genetic drift was noted from prototypical strains in the HN gene with the emergence of a dominant subgroup. Compared to other etiologies of severe acute respiratory infection, those infected with HPIV tended to have better outcomes in terms of ICU admission or death. Clinical Biosafety News

This year's flu vaccine may only be 10% effective, experts warn

5 December - Health officials say there are a number of signs pointing to a potentially rough flu season. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 7,000 cases of influenza have been confirmed in the U.S. so far, which is more than double the number this time last year. Flu is currently widespread in four states, including Georgia, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Massachusetts, the CDC reports. What's more, this year's flu shot may not be up to the task. It is the same formulation that was used during Australia's most recent flu season -- which typically sets a pattern for what the U.S. will face -- and it was only 10 percent effective there. CBS News

Updated guidance for pandemic flu includes new ways to track cases

5 December - For the first time since 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) updated its pandemic influenza guidance, emphasizing the need for better tracking during the human-to-human transmission phase. ... The WHO defined and named phases of an influenza pandemic. In the alert phase, when human-to-human transmission begins, the
agency said there is no need for case-counting. "Case-based reporting (the counting of individual cases) should cease once there is broad community transmission in a country—at this point, syndromic data from sentinel sites, hospital-based data and systematic laboratory testing should be used instead," the WHO said. Case definitions are also newly emphasized in this guidance. CIDRAP Flu Scan (first item)

top of page...

VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

European agency reports on chronic wasting disease, TSE cases
5 December - A European Union summary report on the monitoring of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs) has been published by the European Food Safety Authority. TSEs are a group of diseases that affect the brain and nervous system of humans and animals. These include scrapie, bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), and chronic wasting disease (CWD). With the exception of classical BSE, there is no scientific evidence that TSEs can be transmitted to humans. ... Main findings include:
  * 5 cases of BSE in cattle out of 1.35 million animals tested in the EU – none of which entered the food chain. Only one of these was classified as classical BSE. The animal was born after enforcement of the EU ban on the use of animal proteins began in 2001.
  * 685 cases of scrapie in sheep out of 286,351 animals tested; and
  * 634 in goats out of 110,832 tested in the EU.

No cases of CWD were found in any of the 2,712 cervids tested, including reindeer, elk and moose, in the EU. However, five cases of CWD were reported in Norway: three in wild reindeer and two in moose. Food Safety Bulletin

FDA warns against eating raw dough because of the risk of E. coli HUS
1 December - The FDA is issuing a warning to consumers not to eat raw dough because of health risks of contracting an E. coli HUS [hemolytic uremic syndrome] infection. Eating any raw dough or batter can make you sick because of raw eggs and raw flour. Eggs can contain Salmonella bacteria, and, surprisingly, raw flour can contain pathogenic E. coli bacteria. Food Poisoning Bulletin

Report shows only half of European food recalls made public
7 December - All too often there is a lag between the time European governments know about unsafe food and when public warnings go out about recalls, a new report says. After
the public notice of last summer’s European egg recall because of insecticide contamination, Berlin-based Foodwatch decided to look into just how often such delays occur. The European consumer rights organization, which specializes in food quality issues, found recall information is only getting out about half the time. ... The European Union runs a food safety alert system, which is activated when a member state makes an official report. Belgium filed the first notice on July 20, and the Netherlands and Germany followed. However, according to Foodwatch, the EU let 10 days pass before going public with the news on Aug. 1. In its new report, Foodwatch says news about recalls of unsafe food often gets to European consumers late or not at all. Food Safety News

**Salmonella** outbreak in Pacific Northwest linked to precut melon

4 December - Precut cantaloupe and watermelon slices sold in Pacific Northwest grocery stores have been linked to at least 20 cases of **Salmonella** illness in Washington and Oregon, according to a Dec 1 Food Safety News story. The melon slices were sold separately and in fruit mixes at Kroger brand grocery stores. Genetic testing has linked the illness outbreak to a **Salmonella** Newport strain found on the fruit. Washington state health officials urged consumers to toss any precut melon products bought from about Oct 25 to Dec 1 from QFC, Fred Mey, Rosauers, and Central Market, according to a state health department news release. KTVZ, a central Oregon television station, said patients reported symptoms between Oct 29 and Nov 15. So far, there have been no reported hospitalizations or deaths. CIDRAP News Scan (third item)

**Should you be worried about the arsenic in your baby food?**

7 December - Rice cereal is often a baby’s first solid food, but it contains relatively high amounts of arsenic, a source of growing concern. Now an advocacy group reports that while the levels of this potentially toxic substance in infant rice cereals have dropped slightly in recent years, rice cereals still contain six times more inorganic arsenic, on average, than infant cereals made with other grains like barley or oatmeal. The new report comes from Healthy Babies Bright Futures, an alliance of scientists, nonprofit groups and private donors that aims to reduce children's exposures to chemicals that may harm developing brains. One step parents can take immediately to reduce children’s exposure to arsenic is to feed infants cereals made with other grains, the group suggests. The New York Times
WELLNESS

Baby born from mother with uterus transplant delivered in Texas hospital

2 December - In what some Texas doctors are describing as a “breakthrough in medical research,” a baby was recently born from a mother who had a uterine transplant, the medical center said on Friday. The delivery of the child is believed to be the first of its kind in the U.S. ... Baylor has had a study underway for several years to enroll up to ten women for uterus transplants. In October 2016, the hospital said four women had received transplants but that three of the wombs had to be removed because of poor blood flow. The hospital gave no further information on how many transplants have been performed since then. But TIME Magazine, which first reported the U.S. baby’s birth, said eight have been done in total, and that another woman is currently pregnant as a result. The first successful trial took place in Sweden and as of last year, five babies were delivered from women with transplant wombs. Fox News

Cataract surgery may prolong your life

4 December – ... [A] 20-year study, conducted among 74,044 women aged 65 and older, all of whom had cataracts, found a 60 percent lower risk of death among the 41,735 women who had their cataracts removed. ... The women in the study who underwent cataract surgery lived longer even though, over all, they were sicker to begin with. ... The new study, while confirming the earlier findings of fewer deaths in women, was also large enough to show just how the operation can extend life. Those who had cataract surgery subsequently had reduced risks of death from cardiovascular, pulmonary, neurological and infectious diseases, as well as cancer and accidents. In explaining this result, Dr. Coleman said that when people can see better, “they can also move more and get more exercise. They can see their pills better and may be more likely to take them and take the right ones. The surgery also improves visual contrast, which decreases the risk of accidental deaths from falls or driving. It’s important to get the best vision a person can have.” The New York Times

Even low-dose contraceptives slightly increase breast cancer risk

6 December - ... [D]octors and women have hoped that the newer generations of low-dose contraceptive pills, IUDs and implants eliminated the breast cancer risk of earlier, higher-dose formulations. Now a big study from Denmark suggests the elevated risk of getting breast cancer — while still very small for women in their teens, 20s and 30s — holds true for these low-dose methods, too. ... Because their set of data was very large, scientists this time were also able to get a good sense of the impact of various other hormonal methods —
including the birth control patch, the ring, and implants as well as hormone-releasing IUDs. ... [The researchers] found "a roughly 20 percent increased risk [of breast cancer] among women who currently use some type of hormonal contraception." And the longer the women used hormonal methods, she says, the higher their risk. **NPR**

**FDA warns consumers about adverse events associated with Limbrel, a dietary supplement**

6 December - The FDA is alerting consumers about “potentially life-threatening health problems” linked to Limbrel, a dietary supplement that is marketed to “manage the metabolic processes associated with osteoarthritis.” The company is not removing the product from the market. ... The FDA is reminding consumers “not to use Limbrel because of the risk of drug-induced liver injury, and a lung condition called hypersensitivity pneumonitis. Consumers taking this product should stop immediately and contact their health care provider. ... As of November 21, 20170, there have been a total of 194 adverse event reports regarding Limbrel. In 30 of those cases, FDA medical experts found that the supplement was “likely associated with these adverse events.” **Food Poisoning Bulletin**

**High military rate of sexually transmitted disease defies treatment and education efforts**

4 December - Sexually transmitted disease cases are rising in the military in line with a record number of reported cases across the civilian population in the U.S. "Not long ago, gonorrhea rates were at historic lows, syphilis was close to elimination, and better chlamydia diagnostic tests and more screening were available," Dr. Gail Bolan, the Centers for Disease Control's director of STD prevention, wrote in a recent agency report. "That progress has since unraveled." The CDC reported its highest-ever number of STD cases this year after increases over a three-year period. Similar rising trends are being seen in the military. Syphilis diagnoses doubled during the past decade, according to the military’s Medical Surveillance Monthly Report released in September. Chlamydia and gonorrhea cases, stable or declining since a spike in 2008, also were beginning to rise. **Stars and Stripes**

**Kids aren’t protecting themselves against STDs during oral sex**

6 December - Adolescents and young adults regularly engage in oral sex but seldom use condoms to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, new research shows. That didn’t surprise the researcher who headed the study. “Many studies show that adolescents and young adults are unaware of the health risks associated with oral sex,” said Giuseppina Valle Holway, a sociology professor at The University of Tampa in Florida, in an email. ... Holway and her coauthor Stephanie Hernandez examined reports of heterosexual oral sex and condom use in a nationally representative sample of more than 7,000 U.S. youth between ages 15 and 24. More than half reported engaging in fellatio within the past year, but only 8 percent of females and 9 percent of males said they used a condom. ... Oral sex is
less likely to spread sexually transmitted infections than vaginal or anal intercourse, [Erin Moore] said, but the risk remains. Reuters

Opioid crisis: Criminal justice referrals miss treatment opportunities, study suggests

4 December - A new study ... found that under 5 percent of those referred for opioid treatment from the criminal justice system were directed to medication-assisted programs to treat their disorder. Medication treatment, usually consisting of methadone or buprenorphine, both of which are opioids, helps control symptoms of withdrawal and cravings that can cause relapse. It is considered the most effective way to manage opioid misuse and reduce opioid-related harms such as overdose. In contrast, the researchers found that 40 percent of clients referred for treatment by other sources, such as health-care providers, employers, or self-referral, attended medication-assisted programs. The referral gap suggests a missed opportunity to link one of the most at-risk groups of people into effective treatment at a time when the nation faces a deepening opioid crisis.

Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health News

Rare and mysterious vomiting illness linked to heavy marijuana use

30 November – [A]n obscure syndrome called cannabinoid hyperemesis syndrome, [is] a condition only recently acknowledged by the medical community. It affects a small population — namely, a subset of marijuana users who smoke multiple times a day for months, years or even decades. There's no hard data on the prevalence of the illness. But in California and Colorado, which have loosened marijuana laws in recent years, some emergency physicians say they're seeing it more often. One study in Colorado suggests there may be a link. ... Doctors say it's difficult to treat the condition. There is no cure other than to quit using marijuana, and many patients are skeptical that cannabis is making them sick, so they keep using it and their vomiting episodes continue. NPR

Teenagers embrace JUUL, saying it's discreet enough to vape in class

4 December – Mil Schooley, an 18-year-old student in Denver, Colo., says most of her friends have a JUUL — an e-cigarette that can vanish into a closed fist. ... [R]esearchers saying they're seeing a big spike in use among teens and young adults. ... Devices like these might be introducing a new generation of teenagers to nicotine addiction and leading some vapers to take up smoking tobacco cigarettes, a study out in Pediatrics on Monday suggests. ... The Pediatrics study asked 808 students in three Connecticut high schools each year between 2013 and 2015 if they used e-cigarettes or tobacco cigarettes in the last month. The first year, 8.9 percent of students used a vape pen and 4.8 percent of students smoked cigarettes in the last month. ... The third year of the study, 14.5 students had used a vape pen in the previous month, and 8.5 student smoked cigarettes. (JUUL didn't enter the
Two hidden cancer causes: Diabetes and obesity

4 December - ... According to a new study, nearly 6 percent of cancers are attributable at least in part to obesity and diabetes. Researchers compared incidence data for 12 cancers in 175 countries in 2012 with body mass index and diabetes prevalence figures from 2002, on the assumption that it takes at least ten years for cancer to develop. They found that in 2012, diabetes and a B.M.I. above 25 were independent risk factors for 792,600 new cases of cancer, about 5.6 percent of the 14,067,894 cases reported to a worldwide cancer registry. Among the cancers associated with diabetes and high B.M.I. were tumors of the colon, gallbladder, liver and pancreas. Obesity and diabetes weren’t the only causes of these cancers, but the conditions played a role. The New York Times

top of page...

USAFRICOM

Africa: ‘Opiophobia’ has left Africa in agony

4 December - ... [A] problem that deeply worries palliative care experts [is] how they can help the 25 million people who die in agony each year in poor and middle-income countries without risking an American-style overdose epidemic abroad or triggering opposition from Western legislators and philanthropists for whom "opioid" has become a dirty word. ... Uganda has implemented an innovative solution. Here, liquid morphine is produced by a private charity overseen by the government. And with doctors in short supply, the law lets even nurses prescribe morphine after specialized training. About 11 percent of Ugandans needing morphine get it. Inadequate as that is, it makes Uganda a standout not just in Africa, but in the world. Yet there is very little opioid abuse here; alcohol, marijuana and khat are far bigger problems. A recent major study by The Lancet Commission on Global Access to Palliative Care and Pain Relief described a “broad and deep abyss” in access to painkillers between rich countries and poor ones. The New York Times

Africa: Poor regulation, dodgy pills spur plan for African drugs agency

4 December - ... The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates one in 10 drugs sold in developing countries is fake or substandard, leading to tens of thousands of deaths, many of them of African children given ineffective treatments for pneumonia and malaria. Sub-Saharan Africa has more than its fair share, accounting for 42 percent of reports of counterfeit and low-quality products the U.N. agency has received since 2013. ... At the moment, Africa has a patchwork of national agencies, many short of funds and expertise to clamp down on fakes or approve genuine drugs efficiently. Healthcare experts, who met in
Ghana last week to push the case for coordinated drug oversight in Africa, have a lofty ambition to create an African Medicines Agency (AMA) by 2018. It would be modeled on the 22-year-old European Medicines Agency (EMA) but cover twice as many countries and 1.2 billion people. Reuters

Angola: Angola reports 42 microcephaly cases but no Zika involvement

5 December - Angola is experiencing a "slow but gradually increasing" incidence of microcephaly, especially in the suburbs of Luanda, the country's capital, that might be tied to Zika virus infections, the WHO's African Region said in an update yesterday. Officials first noted an uptick of cases in late September, when a cluster of seven instances of microcephaly ... were reported. As of Nov 29, officials in the African nation have reported 42 cases, 39 in live births and 3 in stillbirths. All but 3 of the cases have been in Luanda province, notably in the southern part of the city. All 15 blood specimens to date have tested negative for Zika by polymerase chain reaction (PCR). "Nonetheless, the negative test result does not necessarily rule out the possibility of Zika infection during pregnancy," the WHO report said. CIDRAP News Scan (fourth item)

South Africa: South Africa reports Listeriosis outbreak, most cases in Gauteng province

5 December - ... In 2017, the [South African National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD)] reports a total of 557 laboratory-confirmed listeriosis cases from all provinces since the beginning of the year. Most cases have been reported from Gauteng Province (62%, 345/557) followed by Western Cape (13%, 71/557) and KwaZulu-Natal (7%, 37/557) provinces. As of 29 November 2017, case investigation forms of variable completeness have been received for 192 cases. ... In non-neonatal cases where HIV status was known (n=63), 62% (39/63) were HIV positive. Maternal HIV status is known for 57 neonatal cases, of which 22/57 (38%) were HIV positive. Final outcome data is available for 12% (70/557) of cases, of which 51% (36/70) died. Limited food consumption history data are available, and indicate that a wide variety of food items documented to have caused previous outbreaks/clusters of listeriosis (including dairy products, meat products, vegetables, fruit, and ready-to-eat products) were commonly consumed, and no specific food items or food consumption patterns that could guide targeted environmental investigations have been identified as yet. Outbreak News Today

...
Afghanistan: U.S. troops to be trained on reporting child sex abuse by Afghans

3 December - As part of the new strategy in Afghanistan, U.S. troops will get training on reporting child sex abuse by the Afghan army and police. The new policy will be aimed at the practice of "bacha bazi," or "boy play," in which boys dressed as women dance at parties and are passed around among warlords and other authority figures. Army Gen. John Nicholson, commander of U.S. Forces-Afghanistan and the NATO Resolute Support mission, said that the new policy "sets out procedures for monitoring, reporting and investigating violations by any [Afghan] Ministry of Defense personnel" suspected of child abuse. Nicholson also said that Lt. Gen. Tariq Shah Bahrami, the acting Defense Minister of Afghanistan, will sign this weekend "a child protection policy which will set clear procedures and hold those accountable who violate the rights of children." Military.com

Yemen: Cholera could resurge in Yemen due to lack of aid, fuel

3 December - Another wave of cholera could strike Yemen, where a Saudi-led coalition blockade has cut off fuel for hospitals, water pumps and vital aid supplies for starving children, the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Sunday. Dr. Nevio Zagaria, WHO country representative in Yemen, told Reuters that 16 percent of Yemeni children under the age of five suffer from acute malnutrition, including 5.2 percent with a severe form that is life-threatening, and the problem is increasing. Although the number of new cases has dropped for 11 straight weeks, 35 districts in Yemen are still reporting cholera with "high attack rates" in communities, Zagaria said. A deteriorating economic situation and lack of safe drinking water, due to water sewage systems in many cities lacking fuel for the pumps, have compounded the humanitarian crisis, he said. Reuters

United Kingdom: England measles outbreaks linked to ongoing large outbreaks in Europe

3 December - In a follow-up on the measles outbreaks reported in the cities of Leeds, Liverpool and Birmingham, Public Health England (PHE) reports that the outbreaks are linked to travel to other areas of Europe and advise the public to ensure vaccinations are up to date prior to traveling this Christmas season. As of 29 November 2017, there were 16...
confirmed cases in Leeds, 11 confirmed cases in Liverpool and 9 confirmed cases in Birmingham. All of the cases have been reported in children and adults who have not received 2 doses of the MMR vaccine. Children and young people who have not received 2 doses of MMR vaccine are at risk. Unvaccinated people travelling to Romania and Italy, where there are currently large outbreaks of measles, are at particularly high risk. 

**Outbreak News Today**

### United Kingdom: Medical issues affect British army readiness

6 December - Nearly one in five British army troops cannot perform full combat duties because of illness, injuries or other reasons, news reports from England said. Of the 18,000 active-duty troops affected, only about 10,000 could only take part in certain combat operations. Conservative Member of Parliament, Andrew Bowie, a former naval officer, uncovered the figures through a written response to a parliamentary question. “I think these figures are very worrying,” Bowie told The Independent. “Far from the 82,000 soldiers that the British army is supposed to have, it seems that, when medically unavailable soldiers are taken into account, it is more like 60,000. Newsline

---

**USNORTHCOM**

---

### U.S.: Amid Puerto Rico disaster, hospital ship admitted just 6 patients a day

6 December - ... The Comfort’s mission has ended, but it leaves behind questions about whether it was adequately used during a time of desperate medical need. The ship was prepared to support 250 hospital beds, but over its 53-day deployment, which included travel to and from the island, it admitted an average of only six patients a day, or 290 in total. An additional 1,625 people were treated aboard the ship as outpatients, all at no cost. In many ways, the Comfort’s story is that of the wobbly recovery effort in Puerto Rico, in which attempts to bolster vital services have often fallen flat or become entangled in bureaucracy and politics. The New York Times

---

### U.S.: FDA panel recommends Zika testing of donated blood be relaxed

1 December - Advisers to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration on Friday recommended that the requirements for screening blood donations for the Zika virus be relaxed due to diminished risk of transfusion-transmitted infection. The advisory panel voted that instead of requiring Zika virus testing on each individual blood donation, tests could be conducted
U.S.: Health risks to farmworkers increase as workforce ages

1 December - ... More than 90 percent of California’s crop workers were born in Mexico. But in recent years, fewer have migrated to the U.S., according to the U.S. Department of Labor. Researchers point to a number of causes: tighter border controls; higher prices charged by smugglers; well-paying construction jobs and a growing middle-class in Mexico that doesn’t want to pick vegetables for Americans. As a result, the average farmworker is now 45 years old, according to federal government data. Harvesting U.S. crops has been left to an aging population of farmworkers whose health has suffered from decades of hard labor. Older workers have a greater chance of getting injured and of developing chronic illnesses, which can raise the cost of workers’ compensation and health insurance. ... Oralia Marquez, a physician’s assistant at the clinic, says older farmworkers often develop arthritis, back pain, foot infections and breathing problems from pesticides. NPR

U.S.: Indiana workers hurt or killed on job prohibited from suing employer

6 December— Data from the Indiana Department of Labor shows it's been a deadly year for Indiana employees killed on the job. Eight Hoosier workers died between September 30, 2016 and April 30, 2017. 13 Investigates uncovered a fact about workplace accidents you might not know about: Even if your employer puts you in danger, you can’t sue for workplace injuries or even death. ... In Indiana, employers cannot be sued for "on the job" injuries - even a worker's death - no matter how egregious or negligent the company's actions. ... Stephen Wagner, a personal injury attorney experienced in workers compensation, says clients and attorneys come to him shocked to learn about Indiana's law. ... "Indiana is among the worst in the country for work comp benefits. Across the board it's stacked in the employer’s favor. We've made a policy decision in this state to favor business over individuals and individuals’ safety,” he added. WTHR

U.S.: Raging wildfires tear through Southern California as officials warn of increasing danger

7 December - The roaring wildfires burning across Southern California threatened wide swaths of the state Thursday, forcing a wave of new evacuations and shutting down major roadways even as authorities warned that the fire activity could worsen during the day. With flames racing across Ventura and Los Angeles counties this week, entire communities were emptied as tens of thousands of Californians and visitors grabbed what they could and fled. The infernos burned through untold numbers of buildings, creating scenes of apocalyptic
destruction. Fire and choking smoke seemed to be everywhere. The largest of the wildfires — the Thomas Fire, which spanned about 150 square miles in Ventura County, roughly the size of Denver — surrounded Ojai on Thursday morning, officials said. ... The blaze prompted officials to shut down the 101 Freeway north of Ventura, leaving no way to travel between Ventura and Santa Barbara, the sheriff’s office said. Officials said they had evacuated more than 50,000 people from 15,000 homes, and some 2,500 personnel were responding to the fire. The wildfires ... are only expected to get worse. Forecasters said raging winds on Thursday, combined with low humidity and dry areas, could help fuel new fires. The Washington Post

top of page...

**USPACOM**

Asia: Filovirus signs in fruit bats indicate circulation in Southeast Asia

4 December - A new study published in *Emerging Infectious Diseases* documents the presence of antibodies to several filoviruses, including Ebola, in populations of Southeast Asian fruit bats. From 2011 to 2016, researchers collected and sampled specimens from three bat species in Singapore. ... From 4.3% to 9.1% of all bats tested harbored antibodies toward filoviruses, including Ebola Zaire, Bundibugyo, and Sudan strains. Marburg virus and Ebola Reston, however, were not detected in the animals. Bats have been identified as reservoirs for Ebola virus in Africa, and though interspecies spillover is unlikely, the authors said continued bat surveillance is useful to understand the potential threats of filoviruses. CIDRAP News Scan (fourth item)

India: 132 chronic lymphatic filariasis cases reported in Maharashtra

7 December - The mosquito-borne parasitic infection, lymphatic filariasis, and the chronic stage of filariasis with lymphedema, is a major concern in Maharashtra state, India, as more than 100 cases were reported, according to a NYOOZ report. In 2016, 2245 newly diagnosed cases of lymphatic filariasis were recorded including 132 cases of chronic filariasis with lymphedema. This is evidence of patients not following through with the full course of treatment. State entomologist Mahendra Jagtap said, "A patient found infected with microfilariae usually do not progress to full-blown stage if he/she completes 4 cycles of treatment in a year. The rise in the full-blown filariasis cases is a serious concern", the report states. Outbreak News Today
India: Variations in epidemiological transition across the states of India, 1990–2016 in the Global Burden of Disease Study

2 December - ... Per capita disease burden measured as DALY rate has dropped by about a third in India over the past 26 years. However, the magnitude and causes of disease burden and the risk factors vary greatly between the states. The change to dominance of [non-communicable diseases (NCDs)] and injuries over [communicable, maternal, neonatal, and nutritional diseases (CMNNDs)] occurred about a quarter century apart in the four [epidemiological transition level (ETL) state groups. Nevertheless, the burden of some of the leading CMNNDs continues to be very high, especially in the lowest ETL states. This comprehensive mapping of inequalities in disease burden and its causes across the states of India can be a crucial input for more specific health planning for each state as is envisioned by the Government of India's premier think tank, the National Institution for Transforming India, and the National Health Policy 2017. The Lancet

Indonesia: Indonesia fights 'extraordinary' diphtheria outbreak that has killed 32

7 December - Indonesian health authorities will launch an immunization drive next week to contain a sharp rise in cases of diphtheria, which has killed at least 32 people, including many children, in the world’s fourth most populous country this year. The health ministry said at least 591 cases had been reported since January, a 42 percent increase from last year, and called the outbreak an "extraordinary event." ... The ministry recorded 415 cases and 24 deaths last year. Indonesia has among the world’s highest rates of diphtheria - along with India and sub-Saharan African countries - even though vaccinations have helped minimize global cases over the past 30 years. Reuters

Nepal: Nepal reports 1st ever case of rat-bite fever

5 December - In a correspondence to ProMED Mail, officials with the Sukraraj Tropical and Infectious Disease Hospital in Kathmandu are reporting the first ever case of rat-bite fever (RBF) in Nepal. According to the message: On 3 Dec 2017, a 56-year-old female from Panauti municipality, (Kavrepalanchok district) visited our hospital (out-patient department, Sukraraj Tropical and Infectious Disease Hospital) presenting with a 3-day history of fever (over 101 F [38 C]), body ache, itching, pain and swelling in her right thumb near the wound, and pain and swollen right axilla lymph node. She developed these signs and symptoms 16 days after the rat bite on her right thumb. She was started on amoxicillin/clavulanic acid as an oral antimicrobial. Outbreak News Today

Philippines: WHO reviewing data on Sanofi dengue vaccine, urges limited use

4 December - The World Health Organization (WHO) said on Monday it hoped to conduct a “full review” by year-end of data on Sanofi’s dengue vaccine Dengvaxia. The Philippines
ordered a probe on Monday into the immunization of more than 730,000 children with the vaccine that has been suspended following an announcement by French drug company that it could worsen the disease in some cases. WHO reiterated its Nov. 30 recommendation that “as a precautionary and interim measure”, Dengvaxia only be given to people known to have been infected with dengue prior to vaccination. Reuters

USSOUTHCOM

Cuba battling medicine shortages in wake of cash crunch

1 December - Cuba is working on fixing chronic medicine shortages that started appearing a year ago due to its cash crunch, health officials said in an article published late on Thursday in ruling Communist Party newspaper Granma. ... [M]ore than 85 percent of the resources its pharmaceutical industry uses are imported, BioCubaFarma Director of Operations Rita Maria García Almaguer was cited as saying in Granma, and Cuba has been struggling to pay foreign providers. ... Many common medicines, for example contraceptives or those treating hypertension, have been scarce or lacking altogether over the past year, Granma wrote. Reuters

The Americas: PAHO reports 1,100 new chikungunya cases in recent weeks

4 December - In the past month the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) has reported 1,106 new chikungunya infections, bringing the yearly total to 184,636 confirmed, suspected, and imported cases. ... During the most recent weeks, Peru reported by far the highest increase, with 782 new cases and 2,450 total for the year, according PAHO’s Dec 1 update. ... Several other nations reported small increases, including the United States, which has now confirmed 93 imported cases this year. A host of nations, however, including Brazil, which has reported more than 90% of this year’s total, have not reported on their chikungunya situation for many weeks. ... In related news, a Dec 1 study ... reports that chronic inflammatory rheumatism is common in patients even a full year after infection. Colombian scientists reported that 38 of 65 lab-confirmed patients (58.5%) had at least one persistent rheumatologic symptom in the year after infection, and 28 (43.1%) had chronic polyarthralgia—arthritis pain in more than one joint. CIDRAP Vector-borne Disease Scan (first item)
The Army Public Health Weekly Update does not analyze the information as to its strategic or tactical impact on the US Army and is not a medical intelligence product. Medical intelligence is available from the National Center for Medical Intelligence.

External Links: The appearance of external hyperlinks does not constitute endorsement by the U.S. Army of this Web site or the information, products, or services contained therein. For other than authorized activities such as military exchanges and MWR sites, the U.S. Army does not exercise any editorial control over the information you may find at these locations. Such links are provided consistent with the stated purpose of this product.

Although we avoid links to sites that may be blocked, all sites may not be accessible from all locations. While we verify the links at the time of publication, we cannot guarantee that they will be active in the future.

Articles appearing in the Update do not necessarily represent US Army Medical Command opinions/views, policy, or guidance, and should not be construed or interpreted as being endorsed by the US Army Medical Command.

The Army Public Health Weekly Update is published by the Public Health Information Directorate, Army Public Health Center.